

The Michigan Legislature

Lansing, Michigan



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High-Tech Executives Express Strong Support For Granholm's Jobs For Michigan Fund Initiative

LANSING – Leading technology executives were in Lansing today to offer their support to Governor Jennifer M. Granholm's \$2 billion bond proposal to diversify and grow the state's economy. Top ranking officials from firms in Ann Arbor, Detroit and Kalamazoo encouraged state lawmakers to take quick action on the proposal that they believe will help Michigan create all kinds of jobs for all kinds of people.

"There is a worldwide race to attract high technology companies and the Governor's proposal will give Michigan a real opportunity to win that race," said Randal Charlton, CEO of Asterand, Inc. "The prize, of course, is high paying jobs that are not easily outsourced."

Charlton's company received a life sciences award to develop new technology designed to unlock the genetic basis of cancer and other diseases. In just five years, the company's revenues have increased nearly 100-fold, and the company now employs 60 people at their Detroit facility.

Joining Charlton at the press conference were David Zimmermann, CEO of Kalexsyn in Kalamazoo and Rob Risser, President and Co-Founder of Picometrix, Inc. in Ann Arbor. Kalexsyn, which was founded after Pfizer reduced its research division, assists pharmaceutical companies in the early phases of drug discovery. The company, which has received support from the state's Technology Tri-Corridor and Western Michigan University's Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center, is currently expanding their facilities. Picometrix, a company which grew out of the Center for Ultrafast Optical Science at the University of Michigan, also received support from the Michigan Life Sciences Corridor which allowed for expansion and additional job creation.

"The Governor's proposal builds on the state's existing strengths, including the outstanding institutions of higher education and the foundation created by Smart Zones, the Life Sciences and Technology Tri-Corridors," said Zimmermann. "But until now, the state's commitment hasn't been significant enough to take those strengths to the next level of job growth and development. The Governor's plan will change that."

The Governor's proposal will focus resources in four key technologies where the state has the best opportunity to compete: life sciences, alternative energies, advanced automotive manufacturing and homeland security and defense.

"The jobs of tomorrow are going to be high-tech cutting edge technology jobs," said Risser. "Every state must wrestle with the question of how to compete for those jobs. Governor Granholm has proposed a strategic, balanced approach that provides adequate investment in all stages of product development. It's the right strategy to make sure Michigan wins the race."

A constitutional amendment, currently pending in the Senate and House would place the Jobs for Michigan Fund before the voters this November. In addition, each chamber is debating the enabling legislation which establishes the framework by which bond proceeds would be spent. These legislative pieces are being sponsored by Senator Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods), Senator Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek), Representative Andy Meisner (D-Ferndale) and Representative Steve Tobocman (D-Detroit), who joined the business leaders at today's press conference.

In addition to participating in the press conference, the three business executives testified before Senate and House subcommittees currently debating the proposal.

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